

would have otherwise been incurred for these recipients. Such optional programs will likely be the first to go as California attempts to manage Medi-Cal with a dramatic decrease in federal dollars.

It must be made clear as well that there is no safety net underneath the Medicaid system to compensate for these draconian measures. For example, in San Francisco, our Public Health Department, which provides essential HIV/AIDS services and many other essential services, currently receives 40% of its income from Medi-Cal. San Francisco's Public Health Department will not only not be able to make up for this loss in HIV/AIDS care resulting from these Medicaid cuts, but will be hard-pressed to maintain its level of current services. Moreover, Congress is cutting other funds essential to public health departments and urban health care infrastructures, such as funds for mental health and substance abuse.

Ryan White CARE dollars and the non-profit sector that exists in the AIDS community are no solutions. Ryan White monies in the Bay Area and throughout California have always been inadequate to meet the demands of the HIV epidemic; they are already stretched to a breaking point. Moreover, in many Ryan White programs and other city and state funded programs, Medicaid funding provides the foundation upon which other funds are used to build the HIV/AIDS care system. Thus, there is no safety net to catch those who will fall between the ever-widening, soon to be gaping Medicaid/Medi-Cal crack.

Reform in Medicaid may be desirable, even necessary. However, what we are looking at in these proposals moving through Congress now with such speed is not careful reform or effective cost-efficiency; it is a wholesale rampage against the medical safety net in this nation.

Thank you.

Ms. PELOSI. I thank the gentleman, and I yield to the gentlewoman from California for her closing remarks.

Ms. WOOLSEY. My final remark would have to do with health care reform in general. I believe until we are willing to first take the tax cuts off the table, second, do something about defense expenditures beyond what was asked by the Department of Defense, and, third, we must look at the entirety of health care reform, not just balance the budget on the backs of seniors and the most vulnerable and not just take one piece of health care. We must look at the entire health care program.

Ms. PELOSI. I thank the gentlewoman for her participation in our special order tonight.

I would just comment on her role as a member of the Committee on the Budget, thank her for her leadership role there in representing the values of our community. Many of us believe the budget of our country should be a statement of our Nation's values and those values should reflect the priority we place on investing in our children and in the health care of all our people and certainly protections for our senior citizens. We have grave concerns about how those at the low end of the economic scale fare in our country, but we have a large responsibility to middle-income and working people in our country to make sure that they are not paying the bill for everyone, and they

would bear a terrible brunt from these Medicare and Medicaid cuts, unless they think that unless you are a senior, unless you are a poor person, this does not matter to you. They have to know that they are directly impacted by it, and their ability to raise and educate their own children will be very, very much affected by the Republican proposals, which I believe are not a statement of America's values, and I hope that the American people will speak out loudly and clearly to our Republican Members of Congress to make their voices heard to our colleagues so that they will reject this ill-advised and ill-conceived, in-secret proposal to cut Medicare and Medicaid to give a tax break to the wealthiest Americans.

A DEBATE ON MEDICARE AND MEDICAID

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. FOX of Pennsylvania). Under the Speaker's announced policy of May 12, 1995, the gentleman from Pennsylvania [Mr. WELDON] is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. WELDON of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I wish I was going to take an hour here on a different topic, but I have to respond, along with my colleague, to some of the things that have just been said.

One of the pluses of our great society is you can say anything on the floor of the House. You do not have to back it up with fact. You can say anything you want about anything. Whether or not you believe it is something people back home have to make up their own minds.

I would say the American people have spoken about what this party has done. I would remind my Democrat colleagues before they leave the floor that since Bill Clinton took office, 136 publicly elected officials have switched parties in America, 136. Zero have switched from the Republican Party to the Democrat Party, and 136 have switched from the Democrat Party to the Republican Party, including 5 Members of Congress and the only American Indian in Congress.

So I would say to my colleagues the American people are listening, and your elected officials around the country are coming in droves to support the ideals and the principles of this party.

What we are going to attempt to do is provide some honest information to rebut what you have just said here. Let me read a quote. This quote is from Senator DANIEL PATRICK MOYNIHAN, one of the most stalwart Democrats in the Senate. This quote was from September 17, 1995:

At the present moment, Medicare costs double every 7 years. The Republicans want to slow that down to doubling every 10 years. The Administration is somewhere in between. No one is talking about abolishing Medicare and, indeed, no one is talking about cutting Medicare, especially the rate of growth.

I would say to my colleagues on the Democrat side this is Senator MOY-

NIHAN speaking. This is not some Republican. This is not NEWT GINGRICH. This is your leader on health care issues and on Medicare issues, Senator MOYNIHAN. If you want to quote someone, respond to the quote of Senator MOYNIHAN. Let us be factual, Mr. Speaker, in this debate. Let us stop the use of partisan politics in attempting to scare senior citizens.

Your party does not have a corner on caring for people any more than ours does. I think it is wrong to use mean-spirited attacks to try to scare seniors into thinking someone is trying to take benefits away from them. That is absolutely outrageous.

I yield to the gentleman from California [Mr. RIGGS].

Mr. RIGGS. I appreciate this opportunity to address my fellow northern Californians in the spirit of bipartisanship. I thought I would come over to the floor and perhaps present a little different perspective than what our colleagues and C-SPAN viewers may have just heard in this last hour.

We have just heard and witnessed a display of incredible partisanship, the kind of scare tactics that have nothing to do about what is really right for this country and everything to do with a naked attempt by the Democratic minority to regain power and regain control of the Congress.

My colleagues failed to point out, as they were talking about these draconian cuts, as they were displaying postcards which I assume are paid for by some special interest group, they failed to point out the House and Senate budget conference report calls for an increase, and I will be happy to show you the numbers, by the way, if anyone would care to walk across the aisle and see them, the House and Senate conference budget report calls for an increase, I think we understand plain English, an increase in Medicare spending in California per beneficiary from \$5,821 today to \$8,839 in the year 2002.

Furthermore, the House budget conference report calls for an aggregate of \$50,283 per Medicare beneficiary in California over the next 7 years. That does not sound like the kind of draconian cuts that I just heard you describing.

In fact, witnessing this whole display really makes me remember the words of Will Rogers, or maybe it was Woody Allen, who said, "No matter how cynical I get, I just can't seem to keep up."

I also want to point out, before the gentlewoman from Sonoma County leaves, I want to point out to her, of course, any other colleagues, I want to point out that the gentlewoman just sent to her constituents at taxpayer expense a so-called franked newsletter, a franked mailer. This is one of the most outrageous and cynical things that I think I have seen in my service in Congress, because it says in the flier, "I am outraged that Speaker of the House NEWT GINGRICH and the extremists in Congress are cutting programs." Then it goes on to say,

"Sonoma County seniors will have to empty their wallets in order to make up for a \$270 billion cut to Medicare."

Here are the House-Senate budget conference figures, an increase per beneficiary, \$5,000 today, \$8,000 in 7 years, an aggregate per beneficiary in California of \$50,283.

Furthermore, these folks in the minority party go on and on and on, but I do not hear them embracing the President's proposal. Is the President not in fact the leader of the National Democratic Party? And the President, finally, after months of procrastination, sent up to Congress a revised budget proposal, and he proposes in this revised budget to address the inflation rate in the Medicare program. He has recognized that Medicare, in recent years, has been growing at a nonsustainable rate. He, too, wants to control the inflation rate.

In fact, according to the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office, the President's proposed savings in Medicare are \$192 billion compared to the \$270 billion in our plan, and that difference, according to the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office, $\frac{7}{10}$ ths of 1 percent. So I do not understand, again, unless this is all about partisan politics and a naked power grab in an attempt by the Democratic minority to regain control of this Congress. I do not understand what this special order is about, because surely our colleagues are not recognizing the inherent fundamental problems in the Medicare program.

First of all, they are not acknowledging that average beneficiaries receive far more than they pay into the system, and that is, we all have access to these numbers, but the average two-income couple receives \$117,200 more than it contributes or pays into the Medicare trust fund. The average one-income couple receives \$126,700 more in benefits than what they pay into the trust fund.

Even more alarmingly, here is the fundamental problem with Medicare: The pool of taxpayers funding Medicare is shrinking. When the program began in 1965, we have roughly $5\frac{1}{2}$ taxpayers supporting each Medicare beneficiary. Today it is 3.3 taxpayers for each beneficiary; and by the year 2035, the ratio, with the baby-boomers reaching retirement age, is going to shrink to 2 taxpayers supporting each beneficiary.

You do not have to be an insurance underwriting expert. You do not even have to understand actuarial tables to realize there is a major problem in the Medicare trust fund that requires, in my view, an honest bipartisan approach to solving this problem.

We heard none of that again in this past hour, so I can only deduce from again, their presentation, if you want to call it that, our colleagues on the other side of the aisle are proposing other alternatives for fixing Medicare. So what would those alternatives be?

Well, the Medicare trustees, which includes three Clinton secretaries and

the administrator of the Social Security Administration, have told us we do have two choices.

Ms. WOOLSEY. Mr. Speaker, point of personal privilege.

Mr. RIGGS. Mr. Speaker, regular order.

Mr. WELDON of Pennsylvania. Regular order, Mr. Speaker.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The time is controlled by the gentleman from Pennsylvania.

Ms. WOOLSEY. The gentleman from Pennsylvania [Mr. WELDON], point of personal privilege, the gentleman referred to me. May I respond?

Mr. WELDON of Pennsylvania. I will yield to the gentlewoman at the appropriate time.

Continue.

Mr. RIGGS. I thank the gentleman again for yielding.

The Medicare trustees put the Congress on notice back in April benefits would have to be reduced by 30 percent or taxes raised, payroll taxes raised, by 44 percent to restore Medicare solvency, unless changes are made to the program as we are proposing.

I would tell the gentleman from Pennsylvania I can only deduce by this presentation we just heard and saw from our colleagues that they are either in favor of reducing benefits by 30 percent and rationing health care benefits or raising payroll taxes by 44 percent, which would wipe out the economic recovery, such as it is in America today, and destroy literally tens of thousands of jobs in the process.

So again I hope we can get past this very cynical, naked display of partisanship that we just saw, this blatant abuse of, as far as I am concerned, of the taxpayers' precious dollar and really have an honest debate and if our colleagues on the other side of the aisle who now, of course, not having even looked our direction over the past hour, of course, not being willing to yield to us, want to have a legitimate debate, I say to them, I would be happy to meet with you here in this august Chamber and schedule a debate.

We will have an honest, open, bipartisan debate, not again these attempts to score strictly partisan political points, because I think that does a disservice to this country. I think we ought to elevate the debate above, again, this political rhetoric that we heard in the last hour.

I thank the gentleman from Pennsylvania for yielding.

Mr. WELDON of Pennsylvania. Let me just say, before I yield to my colleagues on the other side, I will in fact yield to them despite past hours of times where Members of your side would not yield to our Members, namely, I was over here one night with the gentleman from Pennsylvania [Mr. GREENWOOD], who tried repeatedly to get an honest dialog going, but you would not allow that to take place, even though there was no attempt to have bipartisan spirit, I will allow the gentlewoman to respond and have some

comments while the gentleman from California [Mr. RIGGS] is still in the Chamber.

Ms. WOOLSEY. I really did come here to talk to you about fire prevention and be with you on that debate.

Since I was referred to, I do, out of a point of personal privilege, want to respond.

First of all, I would like to thank my colleague from north of me for showing my newsletter, which was actually sent out with the newspaper and it was not franked and it cost a third less at least of what it would have if it had been franked. But it is a newsletter I have gotten compliments about all around the district. People appreciated it. They do appreciate communication from the person that represents them in Congress.

I would like to ask the question about all this rhetoric. One, I do not think you listened to what went on in the hour before, when we were up here. Otherwise you would not be able to accuse us of not answering questions. We were responding to what we heard earlier.

□ 2145

But I would like to ask you, will you take the tax breaks off the table so that we actually can have an honest debate about Medicare and Medicaid and balancing the budget? Would the gentleman not vote for that?

Mr. WELDON of Pennsylvania. Reclaiming my time, I yielded to the gentlewoman thinking she was going to respond to a point of personal privilege about something that our colleague from California said. Evidently that is not the case. I thought the gentlewoman was going to make a complaint about what he said being false or erroneous.

Mr. RIGGS. If the gentleman will yield, I do want to respond to the gentlewoman, because I was, again, just quoting from a flier that was actually sent to me by a disgruntled constituent who came across it somehow. Of course, we can acknowledge that we both represent parts of a single county, Sonoma County, in northern California.

My concern is that, again, I am happy to make this available to anybody who wants to look at it carefully, but my concern is there is no factual information in here. That is where I ask the question. You claim a \$270 billion cut to Medicare. In effect, I would ask the gentleman from Pennsylvania to yield to anybody on that side who wants to acknowledge that the numbers that are actually in the budget resolution, which I will now say for the third time, an increase in California that is higher than the national average, an increase in spending per Medicare beneficiary from \$5,821 today to \$8,139 in the year 2002, an aggregate per beneficiary of \$50,283 over that time period.

Would it not have been more balanced, would it not have been in the

spirit of bipartisanship, to perhaps mention those numbers in this newsletter, which again I am assuming was produced and distributed at taxpayer expense? Would it not have been more honest to inform your constituents of the conclusions in the Medicare trustees' report, the Board of Trustees, Old Age, and Survivors Trust Fund, 1995 annual report? There is no reference to that anywhere in here.

As I pointed out earlier, there are three Clinton Cabinet Secretary members and the Administrator of the Social Security Administration serving on that board of trustees.

I would also like to point out that just 2 years ago, the President of the United States stood here in this Chamber, up at that podium, and said, and I have the actual quote, in his 1993 address to Congress, "Today, Medicaid and Medicare are going up at three times the rate of inflation. We propose," this was in the President's health care proposal, "We propose to let it go up at two times the rate of inflation. This is not a Medicare or Medicaid cut." But I believe that is the term you use in your newsletter.

That is the President of the United States. This is not a Medicare or Medicaid cut. So when you hear all this business about cuts, let me caution you that this is not what is going on. We are going to have two increases in Medicare and Medicaid and a reduction in the rate of growth.

That pretty much summarizes what we have been talking about in our plan.

I want to point out one other thing. There is no link to tax cuts. Apples and oranges. Medicare savings can only be used to save Medicare. The President, of course, has recently changed his rhetoric, claiming, again quoting the President, "Not one red cent of the money being paid by seniors will go to the trust fund. It will go to fund a tax cut that is too big." Notice he says too big, because the President also favors some form of middle-class tax relief.

The President is wrong. Under current law, premiums and payroll taxes paid into the Medicare Trust Fund can only be used for the Medicare Program. This is true of both the trust fund that pays hospital expenses, part A, and the trust fund that pays physicians and other expenses, part B. As the Medicare trustees themselves stated in their April 1995 report, "The assets of the Trust Fund may not be used for any other purpose."

Mr. WELDON of Pennsylvania. I thank the gentleman for those comments. Let me say what offends me most about the debate on this issue is what has become nothing more or less than gross partisan attacks. That is what offends me. Let me tell you why. I am a Republican who works with the other side on labor issues, proudly. I work with the other side on environmental issues, wetlands protection, endangered species. I am in front on all of those issues working with Members on the other side. I am working with the

other side even in areas of defense cuts. I voted to eliminate the B-2 bomber, which I heard many of my colleagues tonight say only Republicans are concerned about strong defense. I can look at the votes and the delegation of our colleagues from California and that vote in particular.

But the point is, you have turned this into partisan name-calling, trying to scare seniors, giving us the impression tonight that only Democrats care about kids and seniors. Let me tell you, I am the youngest of nine kids. My mother is 85. We were born and raised in a poor town. I was the first to go to college. She has 55 grandkids and 38 great-grandkids, all living today. My mother has no pension. She relies on Social Security and Medicare and Medicaid.

I resent having anyone on the other side saying I do not care about my mother. Who are you to say that we as Republicans are insensitive to the concerns of seniors? I taught school in a public school for 7 years in west Philadelphia and adjacent. I ran a chapter 1 program with economically deprived kids. I resent the fact that you stand up here in a 1-hour special order and try to portray Republicans as not being concerned about human beings, and that is exactly what was said tonight. I heard my other friend and colleague from California say, and you know, they do not want to cut defense.

Ask the one million people in this country, the United Auto Workers, ask the Electrical Workers, who have lost their jobs in plants in southern California, in Boeing and GE. Ask them if we have cut defense at all. One million men and women have been downsized because of 9 years of defense cuts, not cuts in the rate of increase, but actual real cuts in terms of defense spending.

So all I am saying is why can we not move beyond the partisanship and discuss this as intelligent human beings? The people back home do not want to see your side get up and call us names and us get up and call us names. They want us to solve problems.

Ms. WOOLSEY. First of all, I would like to be clear that we did not say that you did not care. We talked about what was being proposed. Second, I would like to say, if you want that debate, why did we have 1 day of hearings in the Committee on Ways and Means?

Mr. WELDON of Pennsylvania. We have had debate on this issue for the 9 years I have been here. Talking about 1 day of debate in the Committee on Ways and Means is not about what is going on in this country on this issue, or I have been living in a vacuum. I have that debate at town meetings every day.

Ms. PELOSI. If the gentleman will yield, the gentleman knows the esteem with which Members on this side of the aisle hold him for the values and courage he has demonstrated on his own side of the aisle on these issues. But it is amazing to hear the gentleman be so surprised that people will comment on

a plan, and, yes, we have talked about these issues in general, but in terms of subjecting the particular proposal to the public scrutiny, that has not been done.

I appreciate what the gentleman said about chapter 1 and his participation as a teacher teaching disadvantaged children. That is why I know the gentleman probably shares a concern that many of us have that nearly \$1 billion was cut out of the Labor-HHS budget for that chapter 1 program.

When we talk about the defense budget, the point is we are all for a strong defense, and, God knows, nobody came here and said only the Republicans care about a strong defense. We all care about a strong defense. The point is that when we subjected the budget to cuts, both the rescission bill and in preparing for the budget for next year, defense was off the table. In fact, there was \$7 billion more in the bill than even the administration had asked for, and billions more than last year's budget.

So it may be the appropriate number. It may be the exact appropriate number. All we are saying is, as we subject all of our spending to the harsh scrutiny, why is defense not on the stable?

Mr. WELDON of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, reclaiming my time, as a member of the Committee on National Security, it was President Clinton's Defense Secretary, Les Aspin, who came up with the bottoms up review who told us what we needed to protect this country. To meet Secretary Aspin's bottoms up review, the General Accounting Office said President Clinton's plan was \$150 billion short. The Congressional Budget Office said his plan was \$60 billion short. Democrats like the gentleman from Missouri, IKE SKELTON, on our committee, came out with their own budget saying he was \$44 billion short. The President stood in this very well in the State of the Union speech this year, and what did he say? We need to put \$25 billion more back into defense.

That was not me standing in the well there, it was the President of the country, who is the leader of your party.

Ms. PELOSI. If the gentleman will yield further, the gentleman is talking about increases in defense spending, an overall number. We are talking about what are those dollars spent on and how can there be savings of waste, fraud and abuse and inefficiencies in the defense budget that is subjected to the same kind of scrutiny that the rest of the budget is? It is about that.

Mr. WELDON of Pennsylvania. Reclaiming my time, I will say that I am just as much for cutting out waste, fraud and abuse as anyone, and will take a back seat to no one in attempting to reduce defense spending, whether it is through cutting the Office of the Secretary of Defense, which we are doing by 25 percent this year. While defense spending has gone down, the number of people in the Secretary's Office has gone up dramatically, or,

whether it is by putting in procurement reforms.

But let me say if we are talking about reforming, I never hear the other side, and maybe even some on my side, talk about the waste, fraud and abuse in human service delivery. I looked at a study that was done by the Baltimore Sun last December, and for any of our colleagues listening to this debate tonight, I will be happy to provide a copy of that study.

The Baltimore Sun did an exposé on SSI [supplemental security income]. They found that it is one of the grossest programs in terms of waste, fraud and abuse this country has. Now, whether he talked about some of the sufferings of poor people, which I can very well relate to, believe me, let me say this: Why do we not hear anyone talking about the example that was given in the Baltimore Sun of a family in Louisiana, a common law couple living together, where the mother has now been certified to get SSI because she is too stressed out to work, the father was certified to get SSI because he is overweight and can't work. They have five teenage boys, and because, after a number of tries, the mother was able to get all five kids certified as operating below their functional level, now has all of them fully qualified for SSI, that that family is receiving \$47,500 a year, tax free.

Let me say to my colleagues back in their offices, and to the constituents all across the country, let me repeat that number again, just in case there are senior citizens back home that did not hear it correctly: \$47,500 a year for one family in Louisiana documented by the Baltimore Sun as receiving SSI benefits.

When the reporter asked the mother, "What do you say about receiving all this money?" She said, "I am entitled to it."

You know what? She is. Do you know in fact that under the current guidelines established by the minority party when they were in control, she is not violating the law. She is entitled to \$47,500 a year.

Then the reporter went on to ask her, "Ma'am, how much of this money do you use to help your kids improve themselves?" She said, "I do not use any of that for that. They all have teenage girlfriends, they are teenagers, I give them \$25 a month total to spend on their teenage girlfriends."

To our senior citizens listening across America to this debate, I hope they ask the question to Members of Congress, what are you doing to cut the waste, fraud and abuse out of the SSI system, which is completely out of control?

Let me also further state an example given to me by my good friend and your colleague from California [ELTON GALLEGLEY] when he brought in to me a four-page brochure, printed in Spanish, paid for by the taxpayers of this country. That brochure being distributed in Mexico today, and says anyone who is

pregnant can go to a hospital in ELTON's area and receive prenatal care, postnatal care, deliver the baby, the baby becomes an American citizen, and, furthermore, in Spanish it says the mother cannot be turned in to the Immigration Service.

I wonder if our taxpayers around the country know that their money is going to illegal immigrants to come in and have their children delivered. Is that waste, fraud, and abuse, or only in the case of the Pentagon or others?

What I am saying is this debate should be based on substance, it should be bipartisan, and it should not be this rhetorical name-calling back and forth, because there is enough waste here that all of us should be attacking it. If there is waste in defense, we should be doing it bipartisan. If there is waste in human services, you should be joining with us. If you are not joining with us, you are only ignoring one part of the problem. That is what I object to.

Even though we were not here to get time, I yield to my colleague.

Mr. FARR. If the gentleman would have asked for it, we would have yielded.

Mr. WELDON of Pennsylvania. That would have been a change from past practices of these 1-hour speeches.

Mr. FARR. We are all Californians. We yield a lot.

First of all, this issue about getting to the merits of the debate, and I appreciate that, we want to get to that, and I think it is appropriate. Tonight we generate a debate on the floor that we have not been able to have in committee. I would be willing to come down here and do that and hope we schedule that. I think the real big issue here, and I think you can understand this, if you go out to our constituency and on the one hand are telling them look, we are going to balance the budget; everything is targeted in this, that is why these cuts are in here. Then you turned around and say, by the way, we are also going to give a big tax break.

That is why the phoniness comes. People do not think you can do both. I do not think you can do both. If you really legitimately believe that this whole issue is just related to sort of waste, fraud and abuse, then let us take the tax cut off the table. Just have the Republicans abandon that.

Mr. WELDON of Pennsylvania. Reclaiming my time, what I would say to the gentleman is the Republican Conference came up with a proposal for America, across the board, that we put forth to the American people in last November's elections, and the American people responded overwhelmingly.

□ 2200

As I mentioned in the beginning of my talk, in case my colleagues have not been aware of this, since the President took office, 136 public elected officials have switched parties. None have switched to your party. One hundred thirty-six have switched to our party from California, from Washington,

from Maine, from the south, including five Members of Congress.

But let me say this to my colleagues, where I find fault with your holding up this issue of tax cuts is, where is your proposal to save Medicare? This is the report issued by the three cabinet members and signed not by Republicans, but by Robert Rubin, Robert Reich and Donna Shalala. They said, and I quote, the fund is projected to be exhausted in 2001.

So my question for my colleagues is, where is your plan?

Mr. FARR. We have a plan, the President's plan, and it is a good plan.

Mr. WELDON of Pennsylvania. So the gentleman is saying it is the President's plan.

Mr. RIGGS, correct me, would you read what the President's plan calls for?

Mr. RIGGS. Mr. Speaker, absolutely, I would be happy to, if the gentleman would yield. And, of course, both plans, our proposal to fix and strengthen Medicare and the President's newest budget, have been now reviewed and scored, as we say back here in Washington, by the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office, and I repeat, President Clinton's savings from Medicare amount to \$192 billion over seven years compared to the \$270 billion Republicans will save.

The truth is, Bill Clinton's newest budget would allow Medicare to grow by 7.1 percent, while the Republican budget would allow Medicare to grow by 6.4 percent. When you cut through all the rhetoric and scare tactics, the difference in growth rates in Medicare spending in the Republican budget and in the Clinton plan is only 7 tenths of 1 percent.

Mr. WELDON of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, reclaiming my time, I ask each of my three colleagues from California, do they now publicly state on the record that they support President Clinton's plan, which, in fact, cuts Medicare by what amount or reduces the level of growth by what amount?

Mr. RIGGS. Mr. Speaker, the President's savings, because remember, both his plan and our plan continues to increase Medicare spending, but at a slower rate. His savings is \$192 billion over seven years.

Mr. WELDON of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentlewoman from California to ask if she supports that initiative?

Ms. PELOSI. Mr. Speaker, I was seeking recognition for a couple of different reasons, but I would be pleased to address that point.

Mr. WELDON of Pennsylvania. Does the gentlewoman support that?

Ms. PELOSI. First of all, any savings that come, any cuts in Medicare-Medicaid, if they are deemed to be there, should be plowed back into Medicare.

Mr. WELDON of Pennsylvania. Does the gentlewoman support that level of change?

Ms. PELOSI. No, I do not support the President's level of cuts.

Mr. WELDON of Pennsylvania. So the gentlewoman does not support the President's plan.

Ms. PELOSI. Not the level of cuts. But we cannot just—the point is, I support the President's approach, which is—

Mr. WELDON of Pennsylvania. But the gentlewoman does not support the President's change?

Ms. PELOSI. The savings that come from his proposal are to be plowed back into Medicare.

Mr. WELDON of Pennsylvania. But the gentlewoman does not support that plan?

Ms. PELOSI. I do not support his level of cuts.

Mr. WELDON of Pennsylvania. Which plan does the gentlewoman support?

Ms. PELOSI. I support a plan that approaches—

Mr. WELDON of Pennsylvania. Which plan is that?

Ms. PELOSI. A plan that approaches—

Mr. WELDON of Pennsylvania. No, which plan is it? Identify it by name.

Ms. PELOSI. It does not have a name. It is a plan that says—

Mr. WELDON of Pennsylvania. Is there a plan?

Ms. PELOSI. The plan is let us have universal access for all Americans to health care.

Mr. WELDON of Pennsylvania. Well, whose plan is it?

Ms. PELOSI. The gentleman is very clever. He makes a great long speech—

Mr. WELDON of Pennsylvania. Who has the plan?

Ms. PELOSI. About how we should be civil to each other in a debate. I do not have to have a plan.

Mr. WELDON of Pennsylvania. OK, so the gentlewoman does not have to have a plan.

Reclaiming my time. Moving on to the gentlewoman from California.

Ms. PELOSI. Sir, sir, I have a plan. It is called Medicare.

Mr. WELDON of Pennsylvania. The gentlewoman from California, does she have a plan? Excuse me.

Ms. PELOSI. It is called Medicare.

Mr. WELDON of Pennsylvania. Regular order, Mr. Speaker.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. FOX). The gentleman from California controls the time.

Mr. WELDON of Pennsylvania. Does the gentlewoman from California support the President's plan?

Ms. WOOLSEY. I want to say I am going to repeat what—

Mr. WELDON of Pennsylvania. Does the gentlewoman support the President's plan?

Ms. WOOLSEY. No, I do not support the President's plan.

Mr. WELDON of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, now reclaiming my time, does the gentleman from California [Mr. FARR] does he support the President's plan?

Mr. FARR. I want to see us have a debate on the President's plan in your committee.

Mr. WELDON of Pennsylvania. Does the gentleman support the President's plan?

Mr. FARR. We cannot even get a debate on it.

Mr. WELDON of Pennsylvania. Does the gentleman support the President's plan?

Mr. FARR. I cannot support it. You will not bring it to the floor.

Mr. WELDON of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, we now have the three Members of Congress, who spent an hour on the floor tearing apart the Republican plan, saying it was outrageous, it was insensitive, was not compassionate, and now we have, after each of them have been read the President's plan and said there is a plan out there, it is the President's plan, now have said individually they do not support the President's plan.

That is exactly the problem. And let me point out what this debate has come out to.

Ms. WOOLSEY. Will the gentleman yield?

Ms. PELOSI. Would the gentleman yield?

Mr. RIGGS. Regular order, Mr. Speaker.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Mr. WELDON has the floor.

Mr. WELDON of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I will quote Democrat Chicago Mayor Bill Daley in an article in the New York Times, and I quote. "The only message we have got is the same one we had in November. The Republicans are going to cut Social Security and Medicare. People look at it and say forget it, we don't buy that. The sky isn't falling".

This is not NEWT GINGRICH, this is the Democratic Mayor Bill Daley saying here we go again. We are going to scare the seniors. Like the attempt was made when Ronald Reagan came in to convince seniors that now Republicans were going to end Social Security. It was a scare tactic for nothing less than partisan politics.

And I will again quote Mr. MOYNIHAN, the most respected Member of the Senate on issues involving Medicare and health care. This is from September of this year on David Brinkley.

At the present moment, Medicare costs double every seven years. The Republicans want to slow that down to doubling every ten years. The administration is somewhere in between. No one is talking about abolishing Medicare, and, indeed, no one is talking about cutting Medicare, especially the rate of growth.

Now, Mr. Speaker, if we could get beyond the rhetoric and have an honest debate and Democrats present an honest alternative, if other Members do not like the President's, they should put their plan up. We cannot say we are not going to cut anything, that is not realistic.

Ms. PELOSI. Mr. Speaker, would the gentleman yield?

Mr. WELDON of Pennsylvania. Be happy to yield.

Ms. PELOSI. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman, and I do want Mr.

WELDON to get around to his special order, because he has been such a tremendous leader in the House on fire safety, but I want to respond to him directly about his question about the plan.

The plan I support is called Medicare. I do think that when we talk about the trustees talking about needing some shoring up, it always has. A half dozen times we have had to shore up the Medicare trust fund, and we will do it again. And we can address the waste, fraud, and abuse issue as well. But what we really need is access to universal health care in America to reduce the rising cost of health care in our country which will then have its impact on Medicare costs and Medicaid costs.

So the plan that I support is one that has been successful and it is called Medicare.

I just want to make one other point. The gentleman talked about some anecdotal evidence of abuses at SSI. I am with him on that. Put it all on the table. Subject it all to the harshest scrutiny. Our complaint is not that social services are not subject to scrutiny. We do not fight for them so that people can waste money, we fight for them so people's needs are met. Our complaint is everything is not on the table.

Mr. WELDON of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, reclaiming my time, I appreciate the gentlewoman's comments, and I respect her, as she knows, as one of the tireless workers on behalf of human needs in this Congress and I respect that. But let me say what offends me is that I do not hear the same level of special orders, of dialog over here, talking about the abuse of the human service delivery programs in this country is I hear with the rhetoric going on with Medicare.

This issue of SSI is not new. It is not some anecdotal comment. In fact, the money that is being used to take care of families who can now qualify their kids as operating below their grade level is known as crazy money. And all over the country parents are going to psychiatrists to get their kids qualified so they can collect SSI forever. That is outrageous, because it takes money away from kids who have legitimate needs, and it takes money away from legitimate concerns of seniors who have the need of SSI.

Mr. Speaker, what I am saying is, we have to admit in this body, both sides, that there is gross waste and abuse all over. We need to stop scaring people. The worst part about what I heard tonight is scaring seniors. No one wants to hurt senior citizens. I am not going to vote here to hurt my 85-year-old mother or her friends in my hometown or the town where I was the mayor, which is the second poorest town in my county. I will not vote to do that.

We have to stop the rhetoric of scaring seniors into thinking the bad Republicans are going to rob them and take their benefits, and that is what is

being said here, and that is what offends me.

I yield to my colleague.

Mr. RIGGS. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the gentleman yielding, because I want to add to the other quotes he has cited here tonight, which I think are very important, helpful, and instructive, for the—well, I will not call it a debate because I think we are back at a point where we are having a bit of a dialog.

I want to add the comment from our respected and esteemed colleague from northern Virginia, Congressman JIM MORAN, who said in the Hill newsletter on September 27, "The Republican Medicare preservation act is not nearly as draconian as it was assumed by us Democrats." Then he pauses and goes on to say, "I am not sure how many of us would be willing to admit that."

We would like to have a constructive debate on our proposal, and certainly on any substitute proposals. And just to set the RECORD here straight tonight, I have heard the Speaker of the House, NEWT GINGRICH, say more than once that he will use his power and prerogative as Speaker to make in order on the House floor, when we actually take up Medicare legislation next week, any alternative proposal that your side of the aisle wants to put forward; or, for that matter, he will make in order, under the rules of the House, the President's proposal.

So we are going to have an open and honest debate next week. We are going to have debate on Medicare as a free-standing bill.

Ms. WOOLSEY. Mr. Speaker, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. RIGGS. Let me finish my point.

We will be able to have recorded votes on any competing proposals to our plan. So it is not really true to say that—certainly it is not true to say that this subject has not been thoroughly debated on Capitol Hill. We have had 30 hearings in the House since this session of Congress began back in January; six over in the Senate, the Committee on Commerce alone has had a dozen hearings and heard from almost 100 witnesses and taken hours and hours of testimony. So I think we are well prepared going into this debate.

Mr. FARR. Mr. Speaker, would the gentleman yield?

Mr. RIGGS. Well, I have to yield back to the gentleman so he can yield to others.

But I think we are well prepared going into this debate next week. And again I join my colleague in saying, Where are my colleagues' plan? Let us get it out there on the table so we can look at it and we can seriously consider it in the context of preserving and strengthening Medicare.

Mr. WELDON of Pennsylvania. I have to limit our time now because I do have to do at least 15 minutes on what I came here for. So if my colleagues will stick around, I will yield to each of them to make a closing comment, in fairness.

I will start with my good friend, Ms. PELOSI.

Ms. PELOSI. Mr. WELDON, I want to make the point that when we talk about the fact that there have been all these hearings on the Republican Medicare proposals, they have not been on the proposal that is on the table right now. As we all know, it is congressional procedure to air the legislation that we are going to vote on.

Have we talked in concept about Medicare and about changes in Medicare that might be advisable? Certainly. But do we know the particulars of the substitute plan that was placed on the table Monday night by Mr. ARCHER? Most of us do not. That is the plan the American people should have a period of public comment on. Maybe they will like it. Why be afraid of it?

Mr. WELDON of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, reclaiming my time, the gentlewoman makes a point. This plan is available for anyone who has access to Internet, or, if they call my office, I will send them a copy.

I agree that Members should have ample opportunity to vote. I can recall being here my first session of Congress at 2:30 in the morning when Jim Wright was in the Chair and they brought out a 1,200-page document, put it on the desk, and said we have to vote on it tonight. We didn't have days, hours or minutes. It was the continuing resolution that we were being forced to vote on that none of us had seen.

This did not just deal with Medicare. It was the blueprint for the entire country's fiscal process for the next fiscal year. We did not have minutes to consider it.

Unfortunately, part of the practice of this institution is that we get bills like that. In this case we have it. I have had town meetings, I have interacted with my people. I know the parameters of this. There is a chance to amend it. We will all have an opportunity on the floor to present a viable alternative, and at that point in time we want to hear what your alternative does.

We want to hear it. I have heard tonight that none of my colleagues on that side support the President's proposed plan because of the level of controls on increases, so I will be interested to know what their plan is.

I now yield to my colleague from California, Mr. FARR.

Mr. FARR. I appreciate that, Mr. WELDON. The gentleman mentioned he was mayor of a city, and I think the point to debate here is that America deserves the opportunity to know what the law is going to be. Your city could not adopt a city ordinance the way we are adopting the Medicare plan in America, because your city would require that the plan be published in the newspaper; that there be a public hearing scheduled on the very text of the ordinance being considered.

That is what is the problem with this system. We have not been able to see that in this massive bill, and I am really surprised, and appreciate your concern about the procedure, and I would

hope in the leadership the gentleman would bring about a law like we have in California that says legislators cannot hear a bill unless it has been in print for 30 days. Cannot even hear it.

Mr. WELDON of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, reclaiming my time. How many terms has the gentleman been here, Mr. FARR?

Mr. FARR. For one term.

Mr. WELDON of Pennsylvania. One term. The gentleman has so much eloquence, I thought he had been here for more than one term.

Let me just say that, unfortunately, in the 9 years I have been here, in this session, I have had more chance to look at legislation than any period of time in my history. We have been given bills that do not even go through our committees in the past that we had to vote on on the floor.

I agree, granted, we should have more time, but it is not like we have not been discussing this issue.

Mr. FARR. We have discussed the issue, but we have to look at the law. We are lawmakers. Anybody can go out and discuss the issue. That is an academic exercise.

Mr. WELDON of Pennsylvania. We would like to see your plan. When will we get that?

Mr. FARR. My point is, we have not even had a hearing on that plan.

Mr. WELDON of Pennsylvania. Well, when will we get your plan? When will we get yours to look at?

Mr. FARR. Well, will there be a hearing on it?

Mr. WELDON of Pennsylvania. I will have a hearing. When will my colleagues give us a plan?

Mr. FARR. We will give the gentleman a plan as soon as he schedules that hearing.

Mr. WELDON of Pennsylvania. No. Members are complaining about our not providing a chance to let them look at this, but when are you going to give us your plan to look at to tear apart like they are tearing ours apart?

Ms. WOOLSEY. Mr. Speaker, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. WELDON of Pennsylvania. Give us a date certain. When will my colleagues give us your plan?

Ms. WOOLSEY. We have a plan. Our plan is 30 years old, Mr. WELDON. It is called Medicare.

Mr. WELDON of Pennsylvania. So my colleagues are not going to reform it at all. They do not buy this?

□ 2215

Does the gentlewoman buy this or not?

Ms. WOOLSEY. It is not acceptable to bring the issue of something so important to every senior and every family in this country to the House floor for debate. We have not had hearings.

I was a member of a city council. On that city council we talked about sidewalk repairs to a much greater extent.

Mr. WELDON of Pennsylvania. Reclaiming my time, when do we get your plan to save Medicare?

Ms. WOOLSEY. Our plan is Medicare. Mr. WELDON of Pennsylvania. When will we get your plan?

Ms. WOOLSEY. When we can have a bipartisan debate on what needs to happen in order to fix what is wrong.

Mr. WELDON of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I think I have had enough of this issue. I think the facts are what they are. Anyone watching this who cannot see what this is all about is just not paying attention.

This is not about a bipartisan debate. It is about one party coming up with a plan, maybe it is not perfect, but putting it out there for people to look at, and the other party walking away and saying, we do not even support our President because the plan he has we cannot support. Even though we said initially the President had a plan, we do not want to embrace that because you do not want to make a tough decision. You want to have your cake and you want to eat it, too. You cannot do it anymore. That game is over.

We are going to move on.

I would just say in closing, I appreciate the emotion displayed by myself and other Members. I respect everyone who was here tonight. I would like to continue this. I will come back again. If we get time, we can have a good, honest split-the-time debate. I will come back.

The gentleman from California, Mr. RIGGS, will you come back as well?

Mr. RIGGS Absolutely.

Mr. WELDON of Pennsylvania. So if we get the time tomorrow night, I will be here.

FIRE PREVENTION WEEK

Let me move on to a topic that I originally wanted to address that is very near and dear to me because it is the reason I got involved in public service in the first place. And that is the emergency responders of this country.

Before being mayor of my hometown I was a local fire chief in a volunteer company and director of fire training for a county of 560,000 people. I literally grew up working with those people who respond to our disasters.

The reason why I wanted to take out this special order tonight is that this week is Fire Prevention Week. It is a week where we want to raise the awareness of one of the Nation's most serious problems. That problem is the loss of life caused by fire and disaster throughout this country.

We tend to focus in America on incidents involving war and loss of life from plagues and other illnesses, and certainly that is critical and an important priority of our society. But, Mr. Speaker, we fail to look at the fact that our Nation has the worst record of any industrialized nation in the world when it comes to fires and natural and man-made disasters.

On average, 6,000 people a year die from fires primarily in one- and two-family dwellings. In fact, according to the Safe Kids Campaign, which is a national group focusing on protective

measures for our children, almost 1,000 children each year are killed from fires, primarily residential fires. We in this country do not take the issue seriously unless it is the result of a major disaster, like we saw with the World Trade Center or the Oklahoma City bombing or the wildlands fires out West or a flood like we had in the Midwest or down South. We need to understand the importance of raising the awareness of our children and our families every day throughout the year.

When I first came to Congress 9 years ago, I saw a void in terms of awareness of the people who were out there protecting our communities. And there are a million and a half of them. Eighty percent of them are volunteer; 20 percent of them are paid.

I saw a void in understanding on the point of our public officials that these people are really America's number one domestic defenders. They are the people who respond to every disaster we have, not just the fires in our homes, not just the hazmat incidents, the bombings like we saw in New York, the wildlands fires, the hurricanes such as in Florida, the tornadoes we saw in the Midwest, the floods and the earthquakes. In every one of those instances, year after year, these emergency responders come out and give of themselves to protect our people and our communities.

Mr. Speaker, this is one time during the year when we can recognize the work of these selfless heroes. In fact, at the end of this week, we will have the annual fallen firefighters memorial at Emmitsburg, the site of the National Fire Academy for this country. At that site we will recognize those individuals who gave their life during the last year in protecting the American people.

Mr. Speaker, what is so outrageous is that each year we lose approximately 100 men and women all across America, some paid, many of them volunteers. These individuals selflessly give of themselves to protect their communities and each year approximately 100 of them make the supreme sacrifice.

On this occasion, this weekend, as we do every year, we will pay tribute to their families and their loved ones. I think the best way we can pay tribute to these unsung heroes is to acknowledge the real problem that America has, the need to take care of our children, to educate them on what to do if they are in an emergency situation, the need to deal with our seniors, many of whom are confined and live alone and do not have adequate alarm systems or do not have the adequate ability to protect themselves if an incident occurs in their house and the ability to teach our families how they need to be able to be prepared to deal with emergencies, and that is what this week is about.

Yesterday, the International Association of Firefighters, the organization of paid firefighters nationally, brought to Washington a group of young children and individuals who had suffered burns

in real instances around the country. What a tragedy it was and what a tragedy it is to see someone who suffers burns from an incident in their home or in their place of work.

These kids came down here to remind us that we have an obligation every day of the year to try to heighten the awareness of young kids as to how they can prevent burns from occurring in the home, in the workplace, in the school or other places where our families assemble.

I commend the firefighters associations for bringing those kids here and for Senator DOLE for speaking to them to remind them that we do care and that we are going to continue to work on funding for burn foundations across the country and for educational programs like those provided by the National Fire Protection Association and the International Association of Firefighters to protect our kids, especially those that are done in cooperation with the national Safe Kids Campaign.

Today over across the street, we had, along with the Congressional Fire Services Institute, a 2-hour luncheon session for Members of Congress and their staffs where we taught them how to use portable fire extinguishers. Some say, why is that necessary? My first term in Congress, we had a fire in the Speaker's suite that burned the entire suite and could have jeopardized life in that particular building, but because of aggressive action by some staffers and because of the quick response of the D.C. Fire Department, the fire was extinguished.

We want every staffer in our buildings to know that they should understand how to respond to an emergency, how to use a portable extinguisher. And along that line, we have also done CPR classes where Members of Congress and staffers can learn the basic techniques of CPR and hopefully spread that word back in their districts.

Tomorrow we will have a program at the Capitol Hill Day Care Center where we will talk to young children who are there every day about fire protection, life safety and about some of the basic lessons that they should be learning, like how to dial 911 when an emergency call is needed or how to drop and roll if in fact the child's clothing should somehow catch on fire or one of the other things that can happen to a kid in the home that they need to understand they can take action on themselves.

On Friday, we will have a session with Members of Congress on national legislation looking at the whole issue of disasters. A year ago, over a year ago, I petitioned Speaker Tom Foley to convene a bipartisan task force of Members of this body to focus on the issue of natural and man-made disasters, partly because I felt we were not totally prepared, partly because of the frustration that I hear every day from the emergency responders across the country, and partly because every time we have a disaster this Congress is

asked to come in and allocate billions and billions of dollars that we do not have to pay people primarily in property areas where they could have bought insurance, either flood insurance, earthquake insurance or fire insurance.

This legislation that we are going to advocate and highlight this Friday in fact focuses on a national system to not just take the burden off the taxpayers but to establish a reinsurance fund through the private insurance companies to pay for disasters, but also to provide an incentive for local towns and counties to adequately preplan their emergencies, to make sure those building codes are up to date and enforced, to make sure there are adequate emergency plans in place in each community and to make sure the emergency responders are properly trained and equipped.

So, Mr. Speaker, all week long we will have a series of activities in Washington focusing on the ultimate objective of reducing the loss of life in this country and the damage to property from the perils of fire and other disasters. But I think it is more important than that in terms of the issue not just of educating the citizens of this country but in recognizing those heroes that we take for granted too much in this country.

I have had the pleasure, over the last 9 years, of traveling 49 of the 50 States and to work and speak to individual and State fire service groups in each one of those States. Those brave individuals in each of those 49 States are the same. They are selfless people, unselfish people who care about their neighborhoods, care about their communities. They are Republicans and Democrats, and they are there doing a service in many cases with no compensation as volunteers.

This is a time and this is a week for us to acknowledge them, to pay tribute to their work, to thank them for being the real heroes of this country, that we can look up to and pay our respects to, to pat them on the back for a job well done, to stop by the local emergency response station and let them know we appreciate their work, to take our kids over and help sensitize them to the kinds of things they should understand in case an emergency occurs in their home. This is a week where we can pay tribute to these people.

As I traveled around the country and interacted with these folks, one of the things I heard in my early time in Congress was they just were not getting the response from the Congress that they felt was necessary. We took that notion and 8 years ago, 7 years ago formed the Congressional Fire and Emergency Services Caucus. That caucus, Mr. Speaker, quickly became the largest caucus in the Congress and remains the largest caucus in the Congress with over 400 Members, Republicans and Democrats who laid down their partisan differences and who come together to say, we together can

support these brave men and women and give them the kinds of resources they need.

Following the formation of that caucus, which has had successes in a number of legislative areas, ranging from increasing funds for training to passing legislation dealing with safe cigarettes to dealing with issues involving hazardous materials, putting an emphasis on FEMA, on urban search and rescue and all of the other issues that confront us every day, we also formed a congressional institute, and that institute works as the educational arm of the Congress in sensitizing us to the real priorities that emergency responders have every day.

In talking to these emergency responders nationwide, the one message that I keep repeating to them that is so important is that they have to let public officials at all levels know who they really are. They are not just the people who respond to our disasters. They are not just the firefighters. In every one of the towns where we have emergency response organizations, and Mr. Speaker, there are 32,000 organized emergency response departments in this country, in every one of them, the local fire and EMS department is the location where they hold the town meetings. It is the hall where the young couple holds its wedding reception. It is the organization that gets called when there is a child that is lost and they have got to organize a search party. It is the group of people that you call when the cellar is flooded and you have to pump it out. It is the group of people who organize the July 4th parades and Memorial Day celebrations, Christmases for kids that have special needs and all of other things that make our communities in America so vibrant and strong.

And so during this week, as we recognize and celebrate the need to educate the people of this country on how to protect themselves from the ravages of fire and other disasters, let us especially pay tribute to those brave men and women, 1.5 million of them in 32,000 departments across America who today are responding to every type of disaster that the mind can imagine. Let us thank them for their efforts.

Mr. Speaker, as further effort this week to encourage Members to get involved locally in these issues, we will be distributing this week some of the most important devices that Members can take and sell back home in terms of educating their own citizens on how to prevent loss of life and property damage.

□ 2230

The First Alert Company is providing smoke detectors for every Member of the House and the Senate which they can use as an example of what should be done in every home in this country, and that is placing a low-cost, in some cases, \$5 or \$6 smoke detector in a home that can alert families there is, in fact, a problem.

I would encourage all of our colleagues, Mr. Speaker, to take these detectors, which they are getting for free and to use them as examples of simple things that can be done by families, and if families, in fact, cannot afford to buy smoke detectors, let us know where they are so that we can work with the groups that are providing them nationally. In fact, both the International Association of Fire Chiefs and the First Alert Company have gone time and again to provide free smoke detectors and free batteries to many of our urban areas, especially areas where we have high incidences of poverty, coupled with incidences of arson and fire so we can protect those people who do not have the financial resources to buy this equipment.

These are simple tools, but perhaps one of the most important tools in protecting lives and especially children in terms of incendiary fires and situations that would occur that would threaten the lives of our youngsters throughout this country tonight.

In closing, let me say I took this special order out in hopes I could spend an hour talking about many of the programs in place today and many of the actions that are being done both in this Congress and throughout America, and let me say this issue is about as strong a bipartisan effort as I can think of. The Democrats who are involved in this are leading the way as equals with Republicans on these issues, and they have been supportive along the track all the way down the line even when some of our Republican administrations were not as sensitive to these concerns as they should have been.

I just wish we could take that spirit of bipartisanship that we use in dealing with fire and life safety issues instead of scaring people and use that same spirit to address some of these other concerns that we have in this Nation which cause us to polarize, split apart and just demean each other, call out partisan name-calling back and forth. If we could accomplish that, then perhaps we could really show the American people that we can solve the problems of this country and we can do it in a way that is bipartisan and that can give each party credit, because the ultimate goal is not to achieve a winning edge over the other party. The ultimate goal is to meet the needs of the American people.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. RIGGS. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks on the subject of the special order offered by the gentleman from Pennsylvania [Mr. WELDON] on today.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. FOX Pennsylvania). Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from California?

There was no objection.